

Analysis: Minority Groups Edge Closer to Majority in Chicago Region

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(Giuseppe Milo / Flickr)

Researchers of demographic shifts in the Chicago region have some interesting takeaways following analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data released in May.

One calls the findings “staggering.”

[Analysis of census data](#) by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, or CMAP, found significant declines in the number of white and African-American residents in the Chicago region between 2005 and 2016. As a result, minority groups, including Asian and Hispanic populations, now make up 49 percent of the population.

The report, “Socioeconomic Shifts in the Chicago Region,” examined data from seven counties, including Cook and DuPage.

Document: “Socioeconomic shifts in the Chicago region” (CMAP)

According to CMAP, the white population decline measures about 5 percent, from roughly 55 percent in 2005 to 51 percent in 2016. The decline was most pronounced in suburban Cook County, where nearly 200,000 white residents left during the period studied.

“This very dramatic drop in the white population in suburban Cook is staggering,” said Alden Loury, the director of research and evaluation at the [Metropolitan Planning Council](#).

In 2016, Chicago saw [the greatest population loss of any major U.S. city for the second year in a row](#).

Loury also pointed to CMAP’s findings of modest gains in the Hispanic population in areas where the number of white residents was in decline.

“It’s a continuation of the story of Chicago and the region, that as we see growth among non-whites we see a decline in whites,” he said.

Loury expects to see continued declines in the white population in these areas, but at less “mind-numbing” rates, and says “it’s not out of the realm of possibility” that the proportion of white residents in the region will drop beneath 50 percent by 2020.

While the population shift among white residents occurred primarily outside of the city, around 104,000 black residents left Chicago between 2005 and 2016. In other parts of the region, the black population increased by about 35,000 residents, according to CMAP’s findings.

This suggests that black residents are not only choosing to leave the city, but are largely not resettling in the region.

“A shrinking resident base suggests limited economic opportunity and further inhibits economic growth,” the CMAP analysis notes.

Among the demographic groups that experienced growth, the Asian population recording the greatest in the region in terms of percentage and raw numbers, according to CMAP.

The agency also recorded socioeconomic patterns within these population shifts. Those moving to the region in the greatest numbers earn \$100,000 or more, while lower-income households left at the highest rates.

This trend was most noticeable among the white population, and was not reflected in the Hispanic and Asian demographic groups.

Though experts are working to pinpoint the reasons behind these demographic changes, one thing is clear, Loury said: the landscape of the region will change alongside these shifts.

“Demographic changes don’t occur in a vacuum,” he said.

